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Claire Davison

RMIT University, Australia, claire.davison@rmit.edu.au

Mohini Singh

RMIT University, Australia, mohini.singh@rmit.edu.au

Paul R. Cerotti

RMIT University, Australia, paul.cerotti@rmit.edu.au

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Social Technologies: A six dimensions review of Genre

Claire Davison

RMIT University, Australia
claire.davison@rmit.edu.au

Mohini Singh

RMIT University, Australia
mohini.singh@rmit.edu.au

Paul R Cerotti

RMIT University, Australia
paul.cerotti@rmit.edu.au

ABSTRACT

This paper is a review of literature using the six dimensions of the Genre Theory (Yates, Orlikowski and Jackson 2008) - why, what, who, where, when and how to analyze the current literature on Social Technology usage by individuals. This paper attempts to explain the types of information exchanged, reasons why people use Social Technologies, user profiles and platforms used for social networking. Key findings of this analysis such as rich information, shift in social norms, a new lingua franca, and ubiquity are elaborated.

Keywords

Social Technologies, Web 2.0, Genre Theory, rich information, shift in social norms, new lingua franca.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper is on individual usage of Social Technologies (also known as Web 2.0) rather than businesses or communities. Statistics indicate that individual use of Social Technologies has increased dramatically in the last five years, for example, in the United States the usage of Social Network Sites by adults has increased from 8% in 2005 to 46% in 2009 (Lenhart 2009).

Web 2.0 is a term introduced by O'Reilly (2005) to describe the plethora of new internet applications that support collaboration and communication amongst users. Most Web 2.0 applications differ from traditional Web applications as they are easy to create and edit (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht & Swartz 2004); are easily accessible (O'Reilly 2005); promote and support mobility (Bolter and Macintyre 2007); have real time communication (Madhaven and Goasguen 2007) and are free or cost effective (O'Reilly 2005).

This paper specifically defines Social Technology to include blogs (weblog), microblogs such as Twitter, wikis, file sharing tools such as video-sharing site YouTube, photo-sharing sites such as Flickr, podcasts, Really Simple Syndication (RSS), Social Networking Sites, Social tagging (Folksonomy) and Mashups with new applications evolving by the day (Kolbitsch & Maurer 2006). Internet usage since 2000 has increased worldwide by 380.3% (Internet Usage Statistics 2010) and as use of the Internet has expanded, so too has the use of Social Technologies. For example, there are over 126 million blogs worldwide with 42,000 new blogs created daily (Nielsen 2010). Video-sharing sites are also on the rise. In 2008, 48% of internet users had been to a site such as YouTube, up from 33% in December 2006 (Rainie 2008). Figures show that since 2008 users sharing updates via Twitter, or similar applications, have increased by 8% (Fox, Zickuhr & Smith 2009).

The growing number of users indicates the growing importance of Social Technologies and their relevance to society, thereby underscoring the importance of investigating the implications of their usage. Individual use of Social Technologies is largely unexplored in academic literature. Therefore, in the following sections of this paper an initial attempt to categorize the use of these technologies is undertaken using the Genre Theory (Yates, Orlikowski and Jackson, 2008).

SOCIAL TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENTS – USE AND APPLICATIONS

The growth of user participation and a social foundation are the core developments of Web 2.0 from Web 1.0 (Anderson 2007; O'Reilly 2005). The Internet is no longer the realm of static information-only websites and e-commerce; it is a fully interactive experience (Pascu 2008). Web 2.0 is a technology platform that encourages collaboration and communication (Li & Bernoff 2008) and changes the role of the user from 'information consumers' to authors (Korica, Maurer & Schinagl 2006). Höegg, Meckel, Stanoevska-Slabeva, and Martignoni (2006) describe Web 2.0 as a philosophical change in the use of internet rather than a purely technological one. O'Reilly (2005) and Kolbitsch & Maurer (2006) create a framework for Web 2.0 definition. The following is a brief description of each Technology.

Blogs (weblogs) are an online publication presented in a reverse, chronologically-ordered account of numerous issues (Carrington 2008; Leight 2008). Blogs are not only text but also encompass links to websites, video and audio material (Cox, Martinez & Quinlan 2008). Uses of blogs have been explored through: personal information (Witte 2007; Mitchell, Wolak & Finkelhor 2008) relationship building (Stefanone & Jang 2007); identity and gender (Huffaker & Calvert 2005); social activity (Nardi et al 2004; Schmidt 2007); privacy and security (Dodig-Cmkovic & Horniak 2006); Trust (Adler, Benterou, Chatterjee, de Alfaro, Pye & Raman 2007); motivations of use (Marett & Joshi 2009); and identity (Mazalin & Moore 2004). The breadth of applications underlines the pervasive nature of blogs, making it an important technology.

Twitter is an example of a *microblog* limited to 140 characters but also with options to link information and photographs (Fox et al 2009). Twitter can be used to build a brand (Comm 2009) and expand and maintain a personal network (Powell 2009)

A *wiki* is a collaborative website where authorized users can add, edit or comment on the overall information and content of a site (Gorman 2005). Wikis serve a variety of functions, such as pedagogy (Liu 2010, Larusson & Alterman 2009, Carter, Foulger & Dutton Ewbank 2009); in libraries (Harinarayana & Vasantha Raju 2010) and museums (Tunsch 2007); Wikipedia (Lipczynska 2005), knowledge management (Prasarnphanich & Wagner 2009), social responsibility (Santana & Wood 2009); planning (McPherson 2009), and authorship (Hoffmann 2008).

Social Network Sites (SNS) are personal web pages created by users without a need for any coding knowledge. The pages are then linked to other SNS pages through 'friendships'. These sites allow for different avenues of communication such as instant messaging, blogs, multimedia (including video clips, tagging, private groups, tasks and calendars, scrapbooking, hobbies, interests, photographs) (Hinduja & Patchin 2008). Social Networking sites are used for political engagement (Baumgartner & Morris 2010); activism (Isin 2009); patient care (Barton 2010); studying abroad (Murray & Waller 2007); education (Selwyn 2009); changes in the music industry (Cohen 2010); cognitive development (Tynes 2007); gender differences (Thelwall, Wilkinson & Uppal 2010); risk behavior (Moreno, VanderStoep, Parks, Zimmerman, Kurth & Christakis 2009); and analysis of blog comments (Thelwall 2009).

Mashups blend two or more web sources of information to create a new application (Sheth, Gomadam & Lathem 2007). Mashups are used by industry (Kavanagh 2010); the medical community (Skiba 2007; Worthen 2007); ICT departments (van Duyn 2006); Policing (Orr 2007); Neogeographers (McFedries 2007); and privacy protection (Warner & Chun 2009). Mashups are used for time efficiency, entertainment and a richer presentation of information.

Really Simple Syndication is often referred to as RSS; with other variations being Rich Site Summary or Resource Description Framework Site Summary. RSS feeds online information into a 'reader' or 'aggregator'. The data is then processed and turned into content that is sent out to users who have subscribed to that RSS feed (Gill 2005). RSS literature has examples, such as 'how to' (Lamb & Johnson 2009); Secure Information Notifying Systems (Preechaveerakul, Kaewnopparat & Saelee 2009); education (Pence & Pence 2008); and competitive intelligence (Kennedy 2008).

File sharing is a broad concept that isn't new to Web 2.0, but due to the lower costs of applications, and the availability of the technology, there has been a dramatic growth in usage (Oberholzer-Gee & Strumpf 2007). File sharing encompasses video sharing (YouTube), file and data sharing (Flickr, LimeWire, Bittorent) and podcasting (iTunes). File sharing on Social Technologies is expansive, such as political lobbying (Shanahan, McBeth, Tigert & Hathaway 2010); YouTube as a learning tool (Fralinger, & Owens 2009); patients' privacy (Wertheim, Farrar & Hornby 2009); civic engagement (McKinney & Rill 2009); illegal music sharing (McKenzie 2009; Zentner 2008); copyright of manga (Lee 2009); piracy in the movie industry (Waterman, Ji & Rochet 2007).

Social Tagging (Folksonomy) is the concept of tags being placed by application users to describe their own work. The tags can then be sorted into categories using people's own vocabulary (Al-Khalifa 2007). Folksonomies ('folk' and 'taxonomy') are user driven (VanderWal 2005) in contrast with a taxonomy imposing a hierarchical classification of content. Uses of social tagging have been explored by analyzing data from Delicious, Flickr, and YouTube (Ding, Jacob, Fried, Toma, Yan & Foo 2010); libraries (Lawson 2009) and museums (Srinivasan, Boast, Becvar & Furner 2009); software development (Storey, Ryall, Singer, Myers, Cheng, & Muller 2009); and medical libraries and education (Bianco 2009; Maggio, Bresnahan, Flynn, Harzbecker, Blanchard, & Ginn 2009).

Social Technologies discussed above clearly indicate the richer information content these applications can communicate which could account for the increased usage.

Information content on Social Technologies is richer

Social Technologies can be used to disseminate communication and information sharing content, such as a photo album, film repository, information collection, news collection, or downloading TV and film (Turban, Lee, King, Liang & Turban 2010). Through file sharing applications data such as personal photographs (Van House 2009), music video (Cohen 2010) and film and photographs (Naím 2007) can be transferred, downloaded or posted online for a wider audience. Users can share personal information, gossip and publicize their image (Solove 2007).

Social Technologies are also used to disseminate information, such as Wikipedia (Miller 2004) with information on over 3 million topics (Wikipedia 2010). Some Web 2.0 applications were developed with information sharing as the core idea (Hersberger, Murray & Rioux 2007). Mashups make available information such as world news on a world map so that current events can be traced visually (Descey 2007). The WHO (World Health Organization) create maps of infectious diseases worldwide, including developing nations and war-torn areas (Skiba 2007). RSS content of the feed depends on the source website and may include news (CNN 2010) or entertainment (Hilton 2010).

Social Value Creation is where lobbying and social awareness is facilitated by Social Technologies. India has launched a campaign to save the indigenous tigers using TV, Facebook and YouTube (Reuters 2010). Oxfam uses Twitter to issue updates and information, for example after the earthquake in Haiti financial aid from individuals arrived quickly due to the rapid spread of information via Twitter (Kendall 2010).

Blogging about opinions on politics or news has created a new level of journalism driven by the user – the traditional viewer (Carrington 2008). Anyone with a digital camera can film and download their own news items onto a video sharing site, their blog or SNS. This opens up possibilities to report stories that traditionally may not have found an audience (Jones 2006).

Social Technologies allow ideas and opinions to be published quickly and with little regulation. The clips posted on YouTube can be used to meet political agendas, record changes and propose popular theories, but can also be used as a propaganda tool for disinformation and, in extreme cases, terrorism (Naím 2007). In the United States the information appearing on Social Technologies is considered public record and has been used by criminal defence lawyers to research witnesses (Ward 2007).

Creating controversy through Social Technologies is not a new concept. Perez Hilton makes a living from blogging about celebrities (Hilton 2010), users criticize immunizations programs (Thomson, 2008) and the Russian NATO ambassador used Twitter to berate and bait the American government (Schwartz 2010). When Fritz Henderson was let go from General Motors (GM) his daughter posted a diatribe on the GM Facebook site about his dismissal and criticized the organization (Frean 2009). Before GM deleted this information, it was distributed widely by Jalopnik (2009) a car industry blog.

In Singapore three teenagers were arrested after posting racist remarks on Facebook (Hian Hou 2010), while in Indonesia another teenager was given a suspended jail sentence for posting insulting comments (Associated Press 2010).

Twitter is now extended to legal applications for example the UK High Court used Twitter to serve an injunction against an individual who was impersonating a right-wing commentator on the micro-blogging site (Ahmed 2009).

Social Technologies are also seen as entertainment tools. The user catches up with friends or reads about their favorite entertainer on Twitter (for example Stephen Fry). File sharing sites such as YouTube are changing the way that people receive their entertainment. Individuals can visit different sites and download TV and films with ease thus changing viewing patterns. Over 10 million viewers watched U2 perform their live gig at the Rose Bowl on YouTube, the largest live audience to date (Sabbagh 2010). Mashups are used for entertainment and the literature (Kornblum 2007) provides examples of the mapping of information from TV series and movies onto street maps so a map of Manhattan can be overlaid with the locations of 'Gossip Girl' or 'Seinfeld'.

As an open medium, Social Technologies offer a forum to express opinions, gossip, share inappropriate content, angry and inflammatory content. The content users share online is richer than traditional genres as it is multifaceted, and allows for interaction between the audience and the author.

Shift in social norms with increased importance of human connection

People use Social Technologies for a number of reasons, many to feel part of the technology era, others to form networks and share ideas (Li & Bernoff 2008). Blogs are a place where collaboration, cross-pollination of ideas, brainstorming, serendipity and news gathering occurs (Hinchcliffe 2008). RSS aggregates information and delivers it to the user without having to search for it (Kolbitsch & Maurer 2006).

Communities of people sharing ideas or challenging ideas grow up around Social Technology usage (Korica, Maurer & Schinagl 2006). Blogs form a new openness in information sharing, and thereby the creation of social communities where people interact by expressing their views (Chung & Kim 2008). According to McCullagh (2008) the dominant reason for keeping a blog is to document an individual's personal experiences, share with others and be creative. This is especially useful for patient care (Barton 2010), cancer patients (Chung and Kim 2008), budding writers (Julie/Julia Project – Powell, 2004) and humor (Stuff white people like - Facebook 2010). Social Technologies offer a medium; the applications and platforms are new but the content isn't.

Wikis are online collaborative sites that act as virtual study rooms (Duffy & Burns 2006), communication tools (Wagner 2004), information resources (Reinhold 2006), and a means of peer production and recommendation (Tapscott & Williams 2006) - where individuals can review recommendations made by others and make better informed decisions about online purchases (Brynjolfsson, Hu & Smith 2006). The control has moved from a few marketing executives to individuals.

The collaborative nature of Social Technologies encourages individuals to share ideas (Long 2006), write novels (Thorn 2009), and follow sports teams (McLean & Wainwright 2009). SNS share personal information and promote communication. Information can be funny status updates, or specific information. For example after the girlfriend of a missing person created a Facebook page to appeal for information, people gathered information and offered support (de Bruxelles 2009).

Interpersonal relationships are shifting and the importance of online friends and contacts with similar interests is given increased importance.

According to Boyd (2006) reconnecting with old friends was one of the first large scale social networking success stories (Friendster). In Canada 'Flitter' parties see singles use Social networking sites and Twitter to interact and find a date at the party in real time (Kuan 2010). SNS are a redefinition of interpersonal communication, and allow people to keep in touch with friends (Hinduja & Patchin 2008). Popularity can be measured by the number of 'friends' that one has on their profile (Boyd 2007).

File sharing, especially video and photographs, allows users to subscribe to a community by sharing and commenting on contributions. YouTube's success is attributed to the sense of community that surrounds it (Hilderbrand 2007). Social tagging is more than just the creation of user tags, it is also the grouping of these tags into collections. While networking was not the primary focus of such sites it has evolved into a shared action (Todras-Whitehill 2005). Sustainability is an ongoing challenge for Social Technologies and requires community involvement for the momentum to continue (Fichter 2005; Guy 2006). Involvement is sustained through trust between users, as well as collective ownership and a sense of responsibility to the community.

New media is changing the way we communicate. Couples share logins and passwords to build trust in a relationship. As a result, break-ups online are very different. Status updates are quickly shared by mutual friends, photographs removed and details are passed to the curious and to those directly involved (Holson 2010). A new social application called ChatRoulette allows for complete strangers to chat via their webcam; turn on the camera and be randomly connected to another person world-wide (Hutcheon 2010). As a result the way that relationships are started, maintained and ended has changed dramatically with the increased use of Social Technologies.

As Social Technologies have become pervasive the lines between public and personal spaces are blurred.

Audience

One of the unique properties of a mediated public site is invisible audiences (Cain 2008). This means that discussions and media are stored indefinitely and can be altered and retrieved by third parties without the knowledge of the author (Braun & Pohls 2008). In 2007, when a fatal shooting occurred in Melbourne's CBD, two victims found that their MySpace photos were used by mainstream media without their permission (Petrie, Webb & Sharp 2007). In the UK Facebook was forced to remove the profiles of 30 prison inmates after they used the site to organize crime and taunt victims (Lawless 2010).

Location is no longer a restrictive factor

For the 1.7 billion internet users world wide (Internet World Statistics 2010), Social Technologies can be accessed from a variety of platforms. While mobile technologies are not the focus of this paper there is evidence to suggest that the availability of Social Technologies on multi-platforms encourages the ubiquitous environment (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr 2010). Anecdotal evidence indicates that people connect and use Social Technologies in many different forums, such as cell phones, laptops, ipads, netbooks; where users can, for example, tweet on public transport, in bed, while traveling overseas, in class, on a date or in the labour ward.

Time is irrelevant

Social Technologies have the advantage of being real time applications. While there are some inane uses of Social Technologies there is also valuable up-to-date information in the 'always-on data stream' where users expect instantaneous information (Carr 2010). The Whistler resort (Canada) offers snow updates via Twitter, enabling real-time decisions about skiing and snowboarding activities (Frery 2009).

The rise from 2005 to 2010 in online participation, shows an increasingly technology savvy environment (Fox et al 2009). 'People are getting more accustomed to instant documentation' (Sampson 2010). When is limited only by accessibility to the technology and network availability. However, as networks and technologies become more pervasive and integrated, restrictions may be difficult to enforce (Solove 2007). Given that internet access in most developed nations is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, coupled with increased mobility, individuals can choose the time and place of usage.

Everyone is at it

Individuals, friends, uninvited visitors and hackers are using the full range of Social Technologies (Korica, Mauer et al 2006). Individuals can authorize friends to participate, however the 'open' nature of applications leaves room for others to view the information (Schwall 2003). Outsiders such as lawyers (Ward 2007), the media (Petrie, Webb & Sharp 2007) and potential romantic engagements (Thelwall 2008) can access their information.

College students and high school students are well represented in the literature on the usage of Social Technologies and includes the usage of SNS (Boyd 2007); teenagers and privacy (Lenhart & Madden 2007); private information (Hinduja & Patchin 2008); and education (Selwyn 2009). This supports statistics for the American usage of Social Technologies in which 73% of online teens and 72% of young adults use SNS, as do 40% of adults (30 years and over) (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr 2010). While teenagers and young adults remain the core users of Social Technologies there is definite sustained growth in the use of Social Technologies by adults.

Location does not limit an individual's access to Social Technologies provided there is an internet connection (Madden, Fox, Smith & Vitak 2007). For security or productivity reasons access to the internet may be restricted in different circumstances such as workplaces (SOCITM 2009).

The new Lingua franca

Social Technologies use of different texts within the one medium, incorporating text, hypertext, multimedia and with the additional interaction between the user and author we see an evolution in the mode of communication (Gorman 2005; Orr 2007).

Use of Social Technologies is influencing the length of vocabulary chosen by users. While blogging and wikis allow for long, extrapolated information, tweets and SNS status updates only allow for short sentences. The user must be concise and rely on abbreviated language (Taglamonte & Denis 2008). Truncated sentences such as LOL (Laugh out loud) and OMG (Oh my god) are commonplace (Thurlow 2006).

The size of onscreen vocabulary has also evolved - tag clouds and tweet clouds are examples of a new way of communicating the importance and relevance of a search online. Sites, such as Flickr, create cloud tags that are highlighted in large, bold print to identify the most popular tags (Cosentino 2008). Twitter is also developing data visualizations based on chatter and searches (Bilton 2010). The language of Social Technologies has evolved and continues to do so. The vocabulary changes with text becoming more succinct, sentences are truncated and abbreviations are becoming the norm. Information is presented in different formats with clouds and visualizations becoming standard ways of viewing large amounts of information. However, to establish the genres of developments in Social Technologies and to understand the types of information exchanged - the time zones, place and platforms used - literature on Social Technologies is analyzed in the following section of the paper using the Genre Theory.

GENRE THEORY

Genre Theory according to Dean (2008) synthesizes theory and research about genres, in particular applications. How genres are defined depends on the purpose (Chandler 2008) evidenced by Yates, Orlikowski and Jackson (2008) and other studies in IS. Such as establishing how online communities collaborate and communicate (Crowston & Williams 2000); facilitation of

information on the web (Furuta & Marshall 1996); online newspapers (Ihlstrom & Lundberg 2004); to explain adoption and patterns of use for email (Yates, Orlikowski & Jackson 2008); electronic meeting systems (Antunes, Costa & Pino 2006); videoconferencing (Pargman & Mantz 2002); and computer mediated communication (Erikson 2000). These studies have recognized that the use of Genre Theory to establish the unique properties of Technologies is useful to see how applications have moved forward.

To understand the genres of Social Technology usage by individuals the classification in the following section of this paper is based on Yates, Orlikowski and Jackson (2008) using the six categories of ‘why, what, who, where, when and how’. In this paper *when* is not included as the timeframe for all Social Technologies is 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Also *where* is not elaborated as the technologies are multi-platform supported (PCs, cell phone, laptops, iPads, netbooks) and can be accessed in any location with an internet connection.

The remaining four dimensions are defined as: *How* is the physical manner in which the communication or new technology is created, for example the use of language. *When* is the time frame of application usage. Norms develop over time with the use of new technology, and *when* looks at the expectations of responses. *Who* reflects the participants and their role; actual, intended and those not invited but still able to view information shared on Social Technologies. *Why* looks at the purpose of the application; the driving needs behind its use and proliferation. The *what* of Social Technologies is an unrestricted new format to share richer content quickly, easily and freely.

Taking a Genre Theory approach to analyse Social Technologies means that it is possible to establish the current usage, creating a comprehensive profile of what personal information is shared across Social Technologies by individuals.

Table 1. includes a brief description of Social Technology genres analyzed from the literature discussed above.

Social Technology	Why	What	Who	How
Blogs	Information sharing Information management Collaboration Cross pollination of ideas Brainstorming Community building Social awareness Politics Opinion gathering Information control Entertainment	Photographs Film Information News Opinions Gossip Celebrity gossip Personal experiences Creative writing	Individuals Patients Medical professionals Writers Comedians Celebrities Politicians Media Critics Romantic partners Friends Uninvited viewers	Text Hypertext Multimedia Abbreviated text Acronyms
Microblogs	Social awareness Public discourse Catching up with friends Following celebrities Flirting Real time information	News Opinions Gossip Celebrity gossip Status updates Legal injunctions	Individuals Media Lawyers Romantic partners Sports facilities Friends	Acronyms Hypertext Multimedia Tweet clouds

	sharing Entertainment		Uninvited viewers Young people	
SNS	Social awareness Catching up with friends Following sports teams Communication Information sharing Reconnecting with friends Flirting Bullying Building trust Building community Create awareness Entertainment	Photographs Film Information News Opinions Gossip Celebrity gossip Status updates Visual digital social diaries	Individuals Lawyers Strangers Romantic partners Friends Media Criminals Government Uninvited viewers Communities Syndicates of crime Young people/college students	Abbreviated text Acronyms Text Hypertext Multimedia
Wikis	Information sharing Information management Communication Building community	Photographs Opinions Creative writing	Individuals Hackers Uninvited viewers	Text Hypertext Multimedia
Tagging	Cataloguing Building community Sharing information Sharing visuals	Descriptive words	Individuals Communities	Abbreviated text Acronyms Tag clouds Hypertext Multimedia
Mashups	Entertainment Sharing information Social awareness Communication	Maps TV Film Photographs News – current events Environment and ecological updates Medical updates	Individuals World Health Organization Uninvited viewers	Text Hypertext Multimedia
RSS	Information gathering	Information News	Individuals Choice of users	Text Hypertext
File Sharing	Social awareness Politics Propaganda/disinformation Following sports teams Building community Entertainment	TV Film Concerts Music videos gossip Photographs News	Writers Comedians Celebrities Politicians Media Friends Uninvited viewers	Text Hypertext Multimedia

		Social events		
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Table 1. Four dimensions of Social Technology usage

From Table 1. it is apparent that Social Technologies are used for networking, collaboration, political campaigns, social awareness, flirting, cataloguing and public discourse. The types of information exchanged via Social Technologies are a straightforward combination of graphics, text, images, video and audio supporting news, gossip, legal proceedings, medical advice, entertainment, digital social diaries, and opinions. It is also evident that Social Technologies equally and effectively supports people from all ages, people in different professions, law abiding citizens, organizations, clubs and syndicates. Social Technologies support text, hypertext and multi-media based communication and information transmission. It is also clear that information is moving away from classical language, is abbreviated, ubiquitous, and entails abbreviations and acronyms that are now becoming part of the everyday lexicon.

DISCUSSION

Using the Genre Theory the above analysis reveals a change in the mode that individuals exchange, receive and store information from the previous modes of emails (Lips, Rapson & Hooper 2008), electronic meeting systems (Antunes, Costa & Pino 2006), videoconferencing (Pargman & Mantz 2002), telephone and postal letters to the user driven content of the Social Web. Extant literature on Social Technologies discussed above reveal the following dimensions of new technology genres.

Social Technologies support a new type of content sharing. The content itself is not new as people have been writing journals, sharing photographs or visual representations and networking for hundreds of years but the combination of information types that is manageable in Social Technologies is enormous. This rich information on Social Technologies entail an additional feature unique to Web 2.0 and that is 'interactivity'. This enables people to represent voluntary information and comment and voice opinions both positively and negatively on this new media. Content on Social Technologies is available to a large audience in different parts of the world and has the ability to be enriched by expert opinions and criticized by cynics. Information in traditional media was ephemeral but on Social Technologies is more resilient.

Social Technologies support easy, instantaneously accessible, relatively inexpensive and real time information exchange. It is slowly replacing traditional modes of news dissemination, political campaigning and social value creation. Social Technologies are redefining and enhancing, as well as, at times, destroying relationships and communities. People are building trust in new ways (for example sharing logins) and thereby affecting interpersonal relationships/communication

The demographics of Social Technology usage illustrates that all age groups are participating in the Social web in some way. Users can be baby boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and digital natives (Palfrey & Gasser 2008). Social Technologies are used by people from all walks of life from many different parts of the world.

A new lingua franca is emerging from the use of Social Technologies with the evolution of a distinct hybrid language.

CONCLUSION

From Gutenberg's Press to e-mail, communication tools have changed enormously. Social Technologies are fast evolving as a new communication tool supporting individual's collaborating just as much as other entities. The discussion in this paper confirms the opinion of Lenhart (2009) that Social Technologies are not only adopted by teenagers but traverse all generations and that the multitude of technologies has created a ubiquitous environment. It also highlights that by analyzing the four dimensions of Social Technologies discussed above a new technology genre has emerged. The actual use of Social Technologies with people from different age groups and cultures is yet to be researched and confirmed.

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